



**Knysna Hillclimb 2011**  
22 May 2011

The annual Renault Simola Hillclimb, held in Knysna over the weekend, was a resounding success

Last year's Knysna Hillclimb was a soggy affair, with the rain playing a huge part in drenching spectators and competitors alike. A revised schedule saw the 2011 event moved to May in an effort to counter the inclement weather associated with October. The gamble paid off and the weather was fair. It is growing in size and during the Saturday qualifying session, spectator numbers were estimated to be around the 6 000 mark.

The Hillclimb is the final event in the Knysna Speed Festival which incorporates a motor show, a soap box derby and is a gathering of motoring enthusiasts from around the country. The Hillclimb itself is a simple enough event with the fastest time being the winner. It is a tricky 1.9km road, with plenty of corners that appear to have been designed to throw cars off balance. Outright power isn't going to help either as many of the participants discovered. Proper racing rubber wasn't any help unless you had tyre warmers so tackling the Hillclimb was going to be quite a conundrum for many.

As I walked through the pitlane to see which vehicle brands were present, I noticed there were plenty of Nissan's fabled GTR sports car in various levels of age and tune. With a clever four wheel drive setup and the bullet-proof twin turbo engine, the GTRs were going to be hard to catch. As the first times appeared on the qualifying board, it was clear that the Nissans were easily the quickest cars there.

There were quite an assortment of vehicles that took part in this year's Hillclimb. An Ariel Atom was spotted, as well as a Lotus 7 replica. Toyota's one-off Aygo Crazy hooligan made an appearance and there was even an Alfa Romeo 156 GTA. RenaultSport models were present such as the R26 Megane, RS250 Megane and the all new Clio Gordini. Audi's R8 supercar was also present in significant numbers. Classic cars were out in full attendance as well.

Last year's Knysna Hillclimb winner, Geoff Mortimer was in attendance with his monstrously quick Mitsubishi Evolution IX and looked to be the only non-Nissan that was able to match their times. Sunday dawned and the spectators flocked to the side of the road as the cars were prepared. Wilhelm Baard set the course alight with a blistering 42.444 second run in his lumo green NISMO-powered Nissan GTR R35.

The father and son pairing of Des and Jade Gudzeit in the Nissan GTR R33 and 1000hp R34 GTR respectively tried their hardest but ultimately couldn't catch the flying Baard. That left last year's winner, Mortimer, in the Evo to try snatch victory. Despite some brilliant driving, the Evo couldn't match the pace set by Baard and Mortimer finished third.

-David Taylor

#### Simola Hillclimb 2011 Results

1 Wilhelm Baard	Nissan R35 GTR	42.444
2 Jade Gudzeit	Nissan R34 GTR	42.659
3 Geoff Mortimer	Mitsubishi Evo 9	43.108
4 Des Gudzeit	Nissan R33 GTR	43.558
5 Greg Parton	Nissan R35 GTR	44.741